



Fall 2014

Home & garden

A special section
by the Pleasanton Weekly

Keep growing with season-extending gardening tips for fall

Warm weather, continued care and robust plants have yielded a bounty of beautiful, fresh vegetables — and personal satisfaction — from your garden this season.

As the weather cools and fall approaches, it is not time to hang up your hat, gloves and trowel for the year. Autumn provides optimum weather and ample opportunity to keep growing and harvesting delicious, healthy produce well into the season.

Some gardeners assume that when fall arrives and kids return to school, they'll have less time to garden, and may experience less success from their garden plots. But cooler temperatures and fall conditions can actually make gardening easier and more enjoyable.

Many of fall's best-producing vegetables are also colorful, making them great additions to flower beds and containers.

If you loved summer gardening, you can keep your garden growing right through fall. Here's how to make the most of fall season gardening:

Size up the soil

Most vegetable plants require full sun for six or more hours a day, and because fall provides a bit less sunlight than summer, you may need to relocate your plot to make the most of shorter days. If moving your garden isn't an option, you can still take full advantage of sunshine by planting veggies in containers or by creating a raised bed in a sunny spot.

If you'll be reusing your summer garden plot, remove any leftover debris. Don't forget to pull up weeds

before they go to seed. Fluff any compacted soil with a garden fork. Next, test the soil to see if any amendments are needed. Even if your soil is in good shape, adding a 2-inch layer of bagged compost or a balanced, natural fertilizer can give plants a boost.

Be prepared for frost. Keep materials on hand to protect plants when frost threatens, such as floating row cover, a cold frame or a cloche. On frosty, cold nights, move container plants to a protected spot.

Pick your plants

While crops like strawberries and tomatoes have faded to sweet summer memories, many plants thrive in fall. To ensure a successful harvest, it's important to pick the right plants and give yourself a jump start by using transplants, rather than starting off with seeds.

Planting six-week-old transplants ensures you'll have the best opportunity to take advantage of fall's shorter season, and you'll harvest sooner than if you plant from seed.

Producers provide garden retailers with transplants intended to grow well during the specific growing season and are suited for your geographic region. Seasonally appropriate transplants ensure you'll have greater success in your garden.

An added bonus of fall planting is that many cool crops are also packed with nutrition and are among the healthiest vegetables you can eat.

Choose hardy crops that can withstand light frost and temperatures as low as 25 degrees. Favorites for fall include:

- Broccoli - This versatile veggie is packed with vitamins K, C and A, and is a good source of folate.



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Cabbage is among the plants to thrive in autumn gardens.

- Cabbage - A staple of Oktoberfest celebrations across the country, cabbage comes in several varieties, all of which are high in beta-carotene, vitamins C and K and fiber.
- Kale - Some varieties of kale, like Winterbor Kale, actually taste better when kissed by frost. A prolific producer, kale thrives in fall gardens and is a good source of vitamins A, C, K and B6, as well as manganese.
- Leeks - Prized by gourmets for their milder flavor, leeks are frost-tolerant in all but the coldest planting zones. The health benefits of all onions are well documented, and leeks also add a pop of bright color to culinary dishes.
- Spinach - This nutrient-rich green does as well in fall's cooler temperatures as it does in summer heat. Spinach will continue to produce throughout the season, providing a tasty source of vitamins A, C, K and E, as well as the minerals iron, potassium and magnesium.

The end of summer doesn't have to herald the end of your garden harvest and enjoyment, or a return to the grocery store produce aisle. With the right fall crops, you can achieve a satisfying, healthful harvest throughout the fall. ■

—Brandpoint

New doors transform home

Tips for replacing your tired old doors

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Home ownership is a never-ending process of maintenance, improvements and updates. But how wonderful when a project is completed! I've just had the pleasure of replacing all of my interior doors.

We'd been meaning to get new paneled doors for years. Our house still had the basic tract doors that were standard in 1969. We bought the house 12 years after that and although we've upgraded many things — floors, windows, fireplace, kitchen, bathrooms, yard (several times), the front door and the door into the garage — until now we'd decided to spend our money on other things.

Buying the doors was easy since we took a friend's recommendation and went to a small showroom and picked out what we wanted easily enough. Two-panel doors are now the style. Then last week, it was time to say goodbye to the old interior doors, all eight of them — three bathrooms, four bedrooms and one hall closet.

What would a feng shui person say about a house without any doors? I liked the look in the upstairs hallway — it was open and the energy flowed freely. However I did miss the bathroom doors, especially when a friend dropped by.

Mostly I missed the hall closet door that faces the front door. I thought that closet was orderly until I had a constant view of the

random Christmas decorations, wrapping paper and vacuum cleaner.

But I was only without doors for three days when, first thing in the morning, the new ones were delivered and installed and the gleaming new knobs were attached. What an improvement! We should have done this years ago.

If you are planning to get new interior doors, here are some things to think about:

- If you are also replacing your carpeting, you need to do this first to get proper clearance with the new doors.
- What kind of hardware do you want? My choice without upgrading was brushed nickel or aged bronze (which looks black). Will the hardware you choose match what else is in the house?
- Have you ever considered the placement of your door knobs? I found out that mine were about 6 inches higher than found in doors today. You can get lower knobs but new holes would have to be drilled, for extra work and money.
- What color do you want the doors? The new doors are painted before they are delivered.
- Do you want spring door stops added?
- What three days can you live without any doors? If you want one door to remain in your home while the new ones are cut and painted, make that clear from the start. ■

Four steps for attacking garage organization

Better arrangement can enhance functionality, increase home value

Organizing the garage may be one of the most feared tasks in household history. According to a recent Gladiator GarageWorks survey, nearly three out of four households can only park one car in their two-car garage, illustrating the need for a serious garage intervention.

The importance of having a well-organized garage isn't only for improved functionality — it also helps add overall value to a home. More than 80% of real estate brokers or agents recently surveyed said that a cluttered, unorganized garage can have a negative impact on a potential home buyer's first impression.

Since the garage is often used as the "front door" to homes, having an untidy garage can be very unwelcoming.

There are a few steps that can help homeowners prepare for the ultimate battle against clutter and reclaim their space in the garage:

1. Clean and Prep

Clutter is one of the biggest issues with garage organization. The only way to know what is in the garage is to remove all of the items inside and start with a clean slate.

As you remove items from the garage, be realistic about what you do and do not use and move them

into categories:

- Keep items you use regularly.
- Donate or sell items that are still in good shape but aren't being used regularly.
- Toss items that are broken and that you don't need.

2. Have a Game Plan

First, measure the garage so you can make an accurate plan for storage solutions and factor in large items, such as lawn mowers and sporting equipment.

Next, decide how to group similar items and what your storage needs are. For example, do you prefer to hang items on hooks, store in baskets or be able to hide items in cabinets? Start exploring your options with design tools to finalize your plans.

3. Build Your Storage System

Use the walls in your garage to get gear off the floor and maximize storage space by choosing storage solutions that are durable and long-lasting.

Stackable plastic storage bins or shelving units can sometimes reduce clutter, but they aren't always built to handle extreme temperatures in the garage. They also provide limited



FAMILY FEATURES

Organizing the garage can be a dreaded and time-consuming task to many homeowners, but it can also be among the most fruitful in the end.

design flexibility and access to items when you need them.

"Consider a modular storage system for the walls — they get everything off the floor and allow you to customize so you can reclaim your space," said Karl Champley, do-it-yourself expert and master builder.

"These garage systems are convenient and easy to install giving you the ultimate wall storage solution for baskets, shelves, hooks and vari-

ous other accessories. These systems are the perfect way to achieve the dream garage," Champley added.

4. Add Final Touches

Once you have stored large items in your garage, it's time to add some final touches to maximize efficiency and make your workspace functional.

- Keep a trash can nearby your work area so it stays free of garbage

and debris.

- Hang tools near your workbench so you can easily put them back in their proper place.

- Utilize smaller bins and storage containers for screws, nails and other small items, so they don't clutter your space.

With these steps in mind, tackling a garage organization project should be much easier. ■

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Modern home-design trends are set to revolutionize housing market

Socialization, tech-friendly, adaptable spaces among top Gen Y trends

The housing market is thriving in many parts of the country, and the driving force is an estimated 92 million Gen Now consumers between the ages of 19 and 37 (aka Gen Y or Millennials) that will enter the market to become new home buyers by the year 2020.

These consumers have grown up during the introduction of the Internet, social networking, mobile devices and a huge recession.

Not surprising, this massive group is demanding far different features in their homes from what their parents and grandparents have desired in the past, and it may forever change the way homes are designed and built in the future.

"Gen Now is taking a fresh approach to homeownership by seeking simpler living with smart upgrades," says Carl Hill, director of marketing at Clayton Homes. "They want modern styles and technologies without feeling like they are living beyond their means."

Top housing trends among this generation include:

Socialization

Open floor plans are a must. They want spaces to work together and encourage interaction, not separation. The kitchen is still

viewed as the heart of the home, and it must be a place where socialization can thrive.

Other spaces must work with the flow of the home, with thoughtful design used for bedrooms, bathrooms and laundry spaces. Built-in storage is a must to maximize the utility of space.

Energy-efficient design

This generation sees their homes as a reflection of their own values, and because so many of them value green living, they want a home that complements this lifestyle.

Energy-efficient upgrades are considered a worthwhile investment, such as upgraded appliances and ENERGY STAR certification.

Tech-friendly features

The modern home buyer wants a home that is connected seamlessly with their smart devices, and that means incorporating plenty of tech-friendly gadgets and wireless features into the home design.

Electronic drop zones next to entrance-ways, device recharging stations in work areas and family rooms, and plenty of home-automation upgrades in the kitchen and entertainment spaces are what Gen Y wants in a home today.

Adaptable spaces

Modern home buyers have a keen eye for use of space and how they will need to use these areas, which is why they want homes that flex to meet their changing needs.

Rooms created for transitional use might include a flexible game/entertainment room, or an office that can easily be morphed into a nursery in the future.

Modern design

A savvy group when it comes to their design preferences, this generation may take a simpler approach to living, but they want their spaces to be full of style and functionality. They love integrating bright color, thoughtful design and rich texture throughout interiors.

They want a home that is a reflection of their own personal style — something more unique than the cookie-cutter home designs they associate with their parent's generation. They want a mindful and organized approach to customization to craft a house they can call a home for many years to come. ■

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Solar-powered fresh air skylights with decor-enhancing designer blinds transform a good space into a great space. Natural light and passive ventilation reduce energy bills, and solar-powered fresh air skylights and blinds, along with installation costs, are eligible for a 30% federal tax credit.

What a buyer wants: Green improvements that cut utility costs

Going green is good for the environment, but it can also be good for a homeowner's wallet — and that's the aspect of eco-friendly improvements that seems most appealing to home buyers.

More than 80% of buyers said they would pay more for home features that saved energy and trimmed utility bills, according to a recent survey by the National Association of Home Builders.

That piece of information can be valuable to home sellers looking to get the best price for their homes, especially during warmer months. Home improvements that also reduce utility bills — such as skylights and energy-efficient heating, ventilation and cooling systems — may be the investments that ensure a seller's home will get top dollar and multiple offers.

If you're interested in making energy-efficient, cost-cutting improvements a selling point for your home, you can achieve the benefit with basic, moderate or impressive improvements. What you choose to do will depend on your budget, time-frame and perceived benefit in terms of a speedy sale.

Here are a handful of improvements, from basic to beautiful:

Seal and insulate

Ideally, you've kept up on your home's insulation and sealing all the time you've lived there. If not, potential buyers may be attracted by recent refurbishments to the caulking and sealing around windows, entry doors, garage doors and ductwork.

In most instances, homeowners can easily improve sealing and insulation on their own, without hiring a professional. While the improvement may seem minor, its impact can be significant; EnergyStar.gov says sealing and insulating ducts can boost an HVAC's efficiency as much as 20%, and sealing air leaks and adding insulation can trim annual energy bills as much as 10%.

Replace old incandescent bulbs

When it comes to cost savings, replacing traditional incandescent bulbs with energy-sipping CFLs or LEDs is a cost-effective way to trim electricity bills. Both types of bulbs

use at least 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescents, and last 10 to 25 times longer, according to Energy.gov.

While these bulbs cost more than regular bulbs, potential home buyers are likely to embrace the cost savings they'll reap over the lengthy life of the bulbs. In terms of energy upgrades, it's a relatively low-cost, high-impact improvement for a seller to make.

Install a wireless, programmable thermostat

Connectivity is all the rage. When it comes to reducing heating and cooling costs by smarter thermostat use, wireless thermostats are the next big thing.

Programmable thermostats have been available for years, and help reduce heating and cooling costs by automating settings to use energy wisely.

Wireless thermostats enhance that functionality by allowing users to access their home's temperature controls remotely from any Internet-enabled device. So if you're in the office and realize you forgot to program the settings on your thermostat, you can communicate with the thermostat from your office desktop or your smartphone.

Upgrading or installing a skylight

While many energy-efficient home improvements do their jobs behind the scenes, an Energy Star-qualified skylight is front-and-center, saving energy and beautifying a home.

A skylight appeals to home buyers' aesthetic senses and love of savings and they are especially well received in kitchens and baths where they provide not only natural light but fresh air and privacy. A no leak solar powered fresh-air skylight can help reduce electricity costs by providing passive ventilation and natural light.

Real-estate industry watchers predict buyers and sellers are both active this season. Making the cost-saving improvements buyers crave could help sellers move their homes faster and for the best possible price. ■

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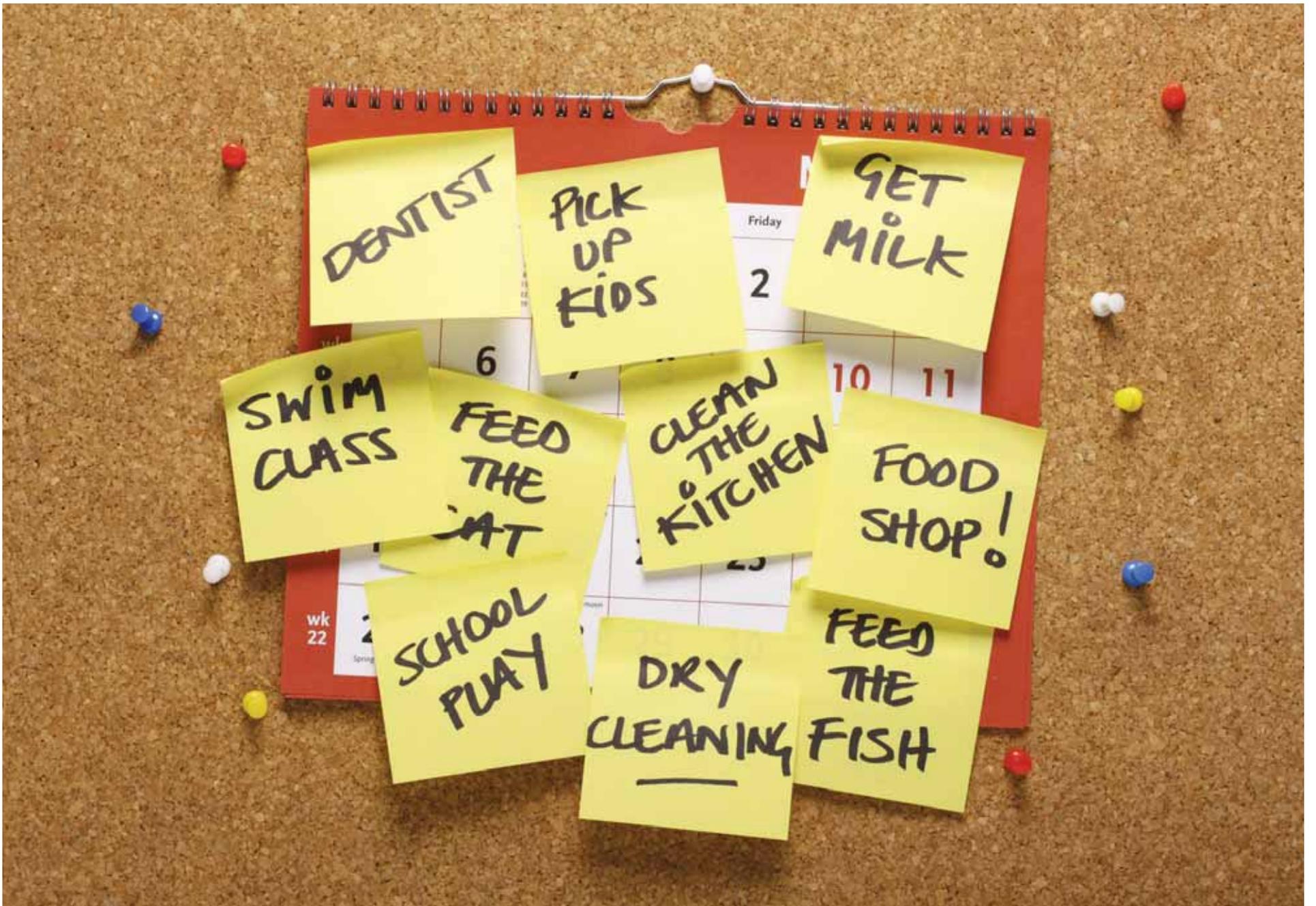


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